



GREEN VENTURE

# Community Green

URBAN/MUNICIPAL

GO GREEN, SAVE GREEN.

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1997

## Healthy Plants for Healthy People

If you are feeling uneasy about the long-term effects of the chemicals you use in your yard, your concerns are not unwarranted. Ninety-five per cent of the pesticides used on residential lawns are considered possible or probable carcinogens by the Environmental Protection Agency.

Statistics show that homeowners are the worst culprits of inappropriate and excessive pesticide use. Acre per acre, our lawns are doused with six to ten times as much chemical herbicides, insecticides, and fungicides as our farm fields.

The excess of these synthetic products is easily washed away in heavy rains, ending up in waterways where it causes havoc for aquatic life.

Organic gardening practices eliminate the need for synthetic fertilizers and pesticides through a careful selection of plants and a number of successful techniques that have been used for hundreds of years before the advent of mass chemical use by the general public.

(Continued on page 2...)



Residential Advisor, Bob Kowalski, consults about composting

## Clear the Air

Poorly tuned vehicles can lead to a 15-50% increase in fuel consumption and poor air quality in the community. Beginning May 1997 and running until the end of October, Green Venture will be providing free car emission testing clinics.

This "Clear the Air" project is funded by Environment Canada, the Region of Hamilton-Wentworth, Mohawk College, Kelly Autobody and others, so that it can be brought to you at no charge! Watch for more details in the next issue of *Community Green*.

**Ancaster Home Depot: May 16, 17, 18  
Stoney Creek Community Park: May 20-23**

**Waterdown Plaza: May 31**

**Mohawk College: June 2-27 (Mon-Fri)**

**Dundas Olympic Arena: July 2-5, 7, 8**

**Valley Park Community Centre: July 14-17**

**Limeridge Mall: August 11-14**

**McMaster University: August 27-28**

**More dates to be announced!!**



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**C. Kurucz, Editor**

### Green Venture:

Green Venture is a not-for-profit community organization serving the Greater Bay area. We are dedicated to environmental awareness and sustainable economic development.

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Drop by our storefront in  
Lloyd D. Jackson Square  
Hours:  
Monday-Friday: 10am-5pm

e-mail:  
[contact@greenventure.on.ca](mailto:contact@greenventure.on.ca)

Web site:  
[www.greenventure.on.ca](http://www.greenventure.on.ca)

tel (905) 540-8787

fax (905) 540-8882

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## Our Mission:

***Green Venture is a not-for-profit organization promoting efficiency, prevention and conservation, thereby improving the quality of life in our community.***

## An Alternative Spring Cleaning

Spring is the time of year that inspires thorough indoor and outdoor cleaning. Before reaching for the usual battery of scouring powders, bleaches and harsh cleansers, read on to see how a few adjustments to your cleaning routine can benefit your health and the health of your community.

You may be surprised to learn that many products used regularly in your home are hazardous materials, dangerous to have around children and pets, harmful to people who use them and have the potential to greatly damage our environment.

Short and long term health problems can result from exposure to hazardous products and their wastes.

Cleaning products are among the most toxic substances that can be found in the average home and many of us have become quite complacent around them, using these noxious substances without a second thought. However, we can all take actions to make our homes toxic-free.

Most household cleaning can be accomplished effectively and safely using combinations of the following alternatives: **baking soda (sodium bicarbonate)**, **pure soap** (such as **Ivory**), **white vinegar**, **borax (sodium borate - a natural mould inhibitor)**, **washing soda (sodium carbonate)**, and **household ammonia** (never mix

## Healthy Plants...

(Continued from page 1)

Organic gardening is a simple, albeit somewhat more involved, system that is based on processes that exist in nature.

If you are a gardener who wants to switch from using synthetic fertilizers and pesticides to using natural soil amendments and pest control methods, Green Venture will assist you.

Call our office at 540-8787 to book an appointment for a "Healthy Plants Home Green-Up". A trained advisor will come out to your home and leave you with a set of recommendations for chemical-free gardening and yard care tailored to individual situations.

Indoor environmental concerns including energy and water conservation will also be addressed, including the installation of a water-saving kit. Our residential assessor

will show you how environmentally responsible behaviours translate into real cash savings.

Best of all, there is no charge for this service valued at over \$100. Environment Canada, the Region of Hamilton-Wentworth, and the City of Hamilton have joined with corporate partners including Union Gas, Hotz Environmental, Tregunno Seeds, Terra Greenhouses, and MacGillivray Accounting to fund this programme for homeowners.

You can also participate in the Healthy Plants for Healthy People program by completing the pledge card insert in this newsletter and mailing it in. Help us count the number of people reducing pesticide use and increasing natural habitats in the Hamilton-Harbour Watershed.

The results of our pledge drive will be reported in future issues.

***chlorine bleach with ammonia - deadly fumes are produced).***

An additional benefit is that these cleaners usually cost much less than their synthetic commercial versions because you don't have to pay for advertising or unnecessary packaging.

See how easy it is to switch to a healthier cleaning routine by trying a few alternative recipes.



(Recipes continued on page 4...)

## Green Q & A

Your natural gardening, energy, water, and waste questions are answered.

**Q: I'd like to make the switch to organic lawn care, but how can I control weeds like crabgrass and dandelions without chemicals?**

**A:** The organic lawn-care system does not include quick-fix, short-lived solutions for ridding a lawn of weeds. Organic gardeners realize that extensive weed growth is almost always the sign of some deeper problem:

Alter lawn conditions to favour the growth of grasses over weeds. A vigorous stand of grass can choke out most weed species. By simply maintaining your lawn at a height of about 3 inches you will actually shade out many broadleaved weeds and annuals. Longer grass also shades the soil, preventing surface evaporation; and allows your turf to tolerate dry spells better.

Feeding your lawn in the Fall with an organic fertilizer will encourage early Spring growth of grass, again shading out weeds before they have a chance to germinate. It is wise not to use cool-temperature compost if you know it contains weed seeds (or fresh manure) to top-dress your lawn.

Choose a high-quality grass seed for reseeding sparse areas. The amount of weed seeds in the mix will be listed on the bag. Generally, inexpensive mixes will contain a greater percentage of weed seeds. A mixture containing different species of grass is the best defence against pests. Water the newly seeded areas deeply.

Remember, the idea is not to create a monoculture. Nature arranges a diversity of plant life in your lawn for a reason. Monocultures have little natural resistance to pests. They require regular doses of herbicides which destroy the natural functioning of *beneficial* organisms in the soil. This sets up a cycle of chemical dependence.

A healthy lawn is a mixture of grass and clover and lots of other plants, including dandelions! Dandelions help produce beneficial micro-organisms in the soil and clover fixes nitrogen in the soil-free fertilizer! Worms and other organisms will also all benefit your grass if they are not eliminated by chemical use.



**Q: How can I ensure my new composter will not attract pests?**

**A:** The best insurance against attracting pests is a bit of prevention. Do not compost any meats, fish, bones, oils, fatty foods or pet manures. Animals will be attracted by the smell. Also, do not store your garbage near your composter for the same reason.

Cover fresh kitchen scraps

with a thin layer of soil or dry leaves or dig them into the compost pile to reduce tempting odours for pests. This will also discourage annoying flies. Other insects, fungi, earthworms, and mites in the composter should not concern you. It is the living creatures in the bin that actually do the work of decomposing.

A healthy working pile, one that uses a layering system and is well-aerated, is less likely to attract pests than one which is left to its own designs. Keep your pile moist, like a wrung-out sponge, to discourage mice. They like dry conditions for nesting.

If you already have pests around, line the bottom and outside walls of your bin with strong half-inch galvanized wire mesh or hardware cloth (16-20 gauge). Piling rocks or bricks around the outside bottom of the composter may also temporarily fend off burrowing creatures.

A locking lid will help keep the bigger and more dexterous racoons out of the milieu.



*If you have an energy, water, waste, or natural gardening question, drop us a line and it may be answered in the next issue of Community Green.*

## Green Venture and Terra Greenhouses Present:

When purchasing merchandise at  
Terra Greenhouses between  
May 1st and June 1st,  
mention Green Venture at the cash:  
A percentage of the receipt  
will be donated to Green Venture!  
*"help keep a green thing growing"*



Now with 2 locations:

TERRA BURLINGTON located on Highway #5 between Brant Street and Guelph Line 332-3222

TERRA FLAMBOROUGH located on the corner of Highway #6 and Concession #5 689-1999

# Alternative Cleaners

(Continued from page 2...)

## Drain Declogger

Pour 1 cup baking soda,  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup white vinegar, and 1 cup salt down drain and cover tightly for 20 minutes. When fizzing stops, flush with boiling water.

**HINT:** Pour boiling water and a palm-full of salt down the drain once a week for regular maintenance to eliminate grease.

## Scouring Powder

Dissolve 50 mL pure soap flakes or powder and 10 mL borax in 375 mL boiling water. Cool to room temperature. Add 50 mL whiting (a fine chalk powder, available from art supply or decorating stores), and pour into a plastic or glass container. Seal well. Shake well before using. To be more abrasive, add more whiting, 15 mL at a time, until it's right for you.

## Silverware Polish

Put a piece of aluminum foil in an aluminum or enamel pot and cover it with 3 inches of water. Add 1 tbsp salt, 1 tbsp baking soda and boil. Add the silverware and let boil for 2 or 3 minutes, remove, rinse, and dry.

## Oven Cleaner

To remove baked-on grease and spills scrub with a paste of baking soda, salt and water. Tough spots can be sprinkled with dry baking soda, left for 15 minutes and scrubbed with a damp cloth.

**HINT:** For large spills, sprinkle with salt immediately, then brush off and wipe down the oven once it is cool.

**HINT:** Preventive measure: use oven drip trays that can be removed and cleaned in the sink.

**NOTE:** Aerosol oven cleaners are among the worst contributors to indoor air pollution. People with respiratory problems, such as asthma and bronchitis, are very susceptible to the fumes from these products.

## Furniture Polish

*For lacquered, shellacked, or varnished wood.*

Combine 30 mL olive oil, 15 mL white vinegar, 1 L warm water in a spray bottle. Apply to furniture and rub until dry with a soft, clean cloth.

**HINT:** After polishing, sprinkle on a little cornstarch, and polish to a glossy shine. This will also help prevent spotting and fingerprint marks.

## Glass Cleaner

Wash glass with pure soap and water. To shine, combine 1 part water to 1 part white vinegar in a spray bottle. Spray on glass and remove with newspaper.

**HINT:** the trick to having the shiniest windows in town is to use newspaper instead of paper towels.

## Upcoming Events

- |                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| <b>May 10:</b>  | <b>Spring Clean Up</b> , 8:45 am. Volunteers will spend a morning sprucing up the Red Hill Valley. Gloves, Garbage bags and refreshments supplied. Meet at Hillcrest School on Melvin Ave. Call Mark at 545-7302.   |
| <b>May 12:</b>  | <b>Green Venture's Clear the Air Launch</b> , 9am - 5pm. Mohawk College. Call Brenna at 540-8787 ext.11   |
| <b>May 17:</b>  | <b>Warbler Walk</b> in Red Hill Valley, 9am. Led by the Hamilton Naturalists' Club. Meet in the new parking lot at Mud Street and Mount Albion Road. Call Terry at 522-6791 for info.   |
| <b>May 22:</b>  | <b>Bay Area Restoration Council General Meeting</b> , 7 pm. Hamilton Spectator Bld. 525-9140 ext. 27405.  |
| <b>May 25:</b>  | <b>Red Hill Valley Family Nature Walk</b> , 1pm. Meet at Rosedale Arena pk. lot (south end of Cochrane Rd.)   |
| <b>June 1:</b>  | <b>Life Underwater</b> , 1pm. An introduction to aquatic life in Red Hill Creek and what it tells us about the environmental health of the waters. Meet at Hillcrest School on Melvin Ave. 560-1177 for info.   |
| <b>June 8:</b>  | <b>7th Annual Nature Walkathon for the Environment</b> , 12 noon. Walk 10 km between Spencer Smith Park (Burl) and Confederation Park (Ham). Focus projects are local trails and the Watershed Interpretive Centre. Fundraise for your favourite environmental project! Suitable for the whole family. 525-9140 ext. 27405. |
| <b>June 14:</b> | <b>Volunteer Natural Areas Nurturing at LaSalle Park</b> , 9am. Help maintain a newly started natural area at LaSalle Park and learn about native plants. Register at 525-9140 ext. 27405.  |
| <b>June 15:</b> | <b>Taking Father Fishing</b> , 1pm. A biologist leads a Father's Day exploration of some of the 22 species of fish in Red Hill Creek. Meet at Hillcrest School on Melvin Ave. 527-2982 for more info.   |
| <b>June 18:</b> | <b>Volunteer Marsh Planting Introduction Night</b> , 7pm. Royal Botanical Gardens Centre. Help restore Cootes Paradise marsh - bring your friends! 525-9140 ext. 27405.   |
| <b>June 20:</b> | <b>Solstice at Midnight</b> , starts 11pm. Meet at Rosedale Arena (south end of Cochrane Rd.) 664-8796 for info.  |

**Looking for Work Experience in Environmental Services?  
Thought about Volunteering for Green Venture?**

**Tel: Zoe at 540-8787**